

JFK Elementary School Parent Council Meeting Minutes, 3.6.19

JFK School, Room 102

5:30 – 6:30 p.m.

Attendees/Introductions

Krista Magnuson, Tracy Triplett, Morgan Haywood, Amy Gusefski, Jen Douglas, Jessica Cole, Sarah Smith, Nadine Desharnais, Sherry Tyrance, Justin Martinez and Johanny (City Year)

Governing Board (Morgan/Tracy)

Playworks Funding. Playworks costs \$31K per year and the Governing Board Grants Committee has made obtaining outside funding to cover or offset that cost a priority. The Committee applied for a grant from the New Balance Foundation (which includes Boston as one of three priority communities and has funded Playworks in the past), but did not receive the funding as the Foundation does not currently fund the program at individual schools.

K-6 Expansion Application. BPS has made expansion of elementary schools to include 6th grade a priority and has identified the JFK as school with sufficient space to undertake such an expansion. Schools that are not able to expand may be at risk of closure in the future. As a result, the Governing Board is applying to BPS to add 6th grade at the JFK. Such a change would result in the loss of our feeder path to the Curley School and allow students to go directly to an exam school or 7-12th grade school after leaving the JFK. Two more classrooms will be needed to accommodate two 6th grade classrooms. As a condition of the expansion, we must continue to serve the same populations in our school (e.g, ELL (English language learners)) at levels the same as we do currently.

Summer Enrichment Partnership with the Mendell and the YMCA. The Mendell invited us to join a partnership with the YMCA to provide a summer enrichment program to a limited number of our students, and BPS has approved it. It will be a free five week (7/8 to 8/9) from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the Mendell for rising 1st through 3rd grade students, 20 of which will be from the JFK. The mornings will follow the Focus curriculum and the afternoons will provide YMCA programming. We anticipate that ELL students will be the target population from the JFK. Students will have to commit to all 5 weeks, but the YMCA will work with families to provide care during the other summer weeks and to accommodate siblings.

Fundraising ideas. The Governing Board Fundraising Committee is considering three fundraising efforts for the remainder of the year: a yard sale in early May, a JFK t-shirt sale at Field Day, and a talent show in June. For next year it is considering a spring carnival. Other ideas include a family movie night in the auditorium open to the wider community. The parents in attendance voiced enthusiastic support for the movie night idea.

Beach Party (Nadine)

The Beach Party is scheduled for March 26, 5-6:45. There will be no entry fee, but food, drinks, and raffle tickets will be sold. Sign-up genius will be used to solicit help and donations. City Year agreed to help set up after its after school obligations end. Yard sticks are needed for limbo.

City Year Events (Justin)

City Year is planning a “giant recess” party in April and also pancake breakfasts for students during testing weeks. Parent help in making pancakes is requested.

Spring Bake Sale (Krista)

We have obtained a permit application and will submit it on Friday for a May 3rd bake sale at Jackson Square. The application is expected to take 30 days to process. The timing will be 7-9:30 a.m., at least, and, if we have sufficient volunteers, we'll also sell in the afternoon.

My Way Café Update (Krista)

The My Way Café program is funded by the Shaw Family Foundation and has already been implemented in East Boston and Mattapan schools. It provides for construction of a kitchen space in each participating school and a Chipotle-like dining experience in which kids will get more choice in their lunch items, have a wider variety of fresh items to choose from, and staff will be trained to orient kids toward healthier options. The City pays for part of the construction costs. The Mendell currently has it in place and it is expanding neighborhood by neighborhood. We are considering advocating for JP to be next. To this end, some JFK parents visited the Patrick J. Kennedy school where it has been implemented and we sent home a survey to all families to gauge school interest. We received 50 responses, most of which are from families that currently rely on school lunch. There were a variety of views on the quality of the current school lunches, but 35% rated it low. Many responses indicated a preference for more fruit and vegetables, more fresh items, and less packaging. Eighty-five percent stated interest in having the JFK participate in the program, however this number may be low as it is not clear whether all respondents understood that the lunch would still be free. Krista will be talking to City Councilor O'Malley's office about the desire to bring the program to the JFK. We will need to decide whether we want to advocate for the program just at the JFK or for its implementation in JP, in general. It may be best to represent that a number of schools are interested, and if we take that path we should gauge the interest of other JP schools.

Budget Cuts Due to “Under-Enrollment” at Nathan Hale (Sarah)

The Nathan Hale School's budget included a \$100,000 cut based on alleged under-enrollment. Because the school is very desirable and high-performing, the parents and staff are challenging this change, including by issuing a press release describing a third-party analysis they procured. They presented on this issue at a recent City-Wide Parent Council meeting. This experience has shown a lack of transparency around waitlists at schools and raises the question of whether BPS is attempting to make small schools, such as the Hale, look inefficient and, thus, appropriate to close.

Krista reported that a number of groups have formed education equity coalition. The coalition is organizing a series of fora on inequities in the education system, starting with one on budget, which will be held on March 19 at 6 p.m. at the St. Stephens Church. Krista will also share links providing updates on the state education funding Education PROMISE Act sponsored by Sen. Sonia Chang-Diaz and a petition regarding the lack of transparency in the Build BPS initiative.